Special package for development of tourism

†3304. SHRI JANESWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have formulated any special package to promote tourism in economically backward States;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government will formulate any special package for integrated development of tourism in the States which are economically backward but having rich culture; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) to (d) The Department of Tourism extends central financial assistance to the States/UTs, including economically backward States, for development of tourism infrastructure, based on the projects prioritized in consultation with them. Special thrust has been given in the existing tourism infrastructure development scheme to J&K, North-East and other economically backward States having rich Culture. Moreover, tourism infrastructure development including capacity building has also been undertaken in identified rural sites to provide benefit to community at large and generate employment in rural areas.

Maintenance of inscriptions at Vikramkhol and Alabgarh in Orissa

t3305. SHRI SURENDRA LATH: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that 5000 years old inscriptions at Vikramkhol and Alabgarh in Jharsugra district in Orissa have been destroyed upto 90 per cent due to lack of proper maintenance;

(b) if so, whether Archaeological Survey of India is taking any steps to save them; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) to (c) The inscriptions at Vikramkhol are centrally protected and in a good state to of preservation. The inscriptions

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

at Alabgarh are not protected by the ASI or the State Government. However, the Government of Orissa has been requested to take necessary steps to preserve the inscription at Alabgarh.

World Heritage Site status to buildings of Maandu by UNESCO

†3306. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Archaeological Survey of India has entered into any correspondence with UNESCO for giving world heritage Site status to building of Maandu; and

(b) if so, the reaction of UNESCO in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) and (b) Before submitting the nomination dossier of a property to UNESCO World Heritgage Centre for conferring World Heritage status, the said property should be included in a tentative list maintained by UNESCO. Accordingly, proposal of the Archaeological Survey of India to include Maandu in the tentative list has been accepted by the UNESCO and included in the tentative list.

Campaign to promote Medical Tourism

3307. DR. VIJAY MALLYA: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal with the Centre to launch an overseas compaign to project India as an attractive tourism destination;

(b) what is the approximate number of medical tourists expected to visit India by 2010, and what are the projected earnings; and

(c) whether Government have relaxed the norms to issue visas to medical tourists and from how many countries the medical tourists are coming to India?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) Department of Tourism since 2002-2003 has launched several campaigns in the global print, electronic, web and outdoor media to position India as an attractive tourism destination.

(b) Medical Tourism is a new initiative launched during the current year and it is too early to forecast the numbers and earnings by 2010.

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† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.